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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000996

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON JOINT U.S.-HONDURAN MILITARY BASE  
SOTO CANO/PALMEROLA, MAY 09, 2005

1. On 05/09, the San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "Tiempo" carried an editorial entitled "Palmerola." "For many years Comayagua's agricultural workers have asked the government to use the military airport of Palmerola for transporting their goods to the U.S. and other markets, in order to save costs and improve the quality of the exportations."

"On the other hand, Palmerola is being considered an alternative as an international airport due to its proximity to the capital city."

"President Maduro has ordered the start of negotiations to use it for commercial purposes, and, we suppose, without abolishing its military purpose."

"We also have to be conscientious that the transformation of the military base into an international airport is not a perfect solution for Tegucigalpa and all the Western and Southern population of the country. They have to establish a system that solves the time and transportation problem."

"They have talked about building a highway which will cost more or less the same as the building of a new airport. That is without counting Inter Airport's contract, which has exclusivity for operation and management of all the commercial airports in the country."

2. Comment: Post notes that contrary to this editorial, "negotiations" have not begun over the possible use of Soto Cano/Palmerola for civilian aviation, a though the Gott has broached the subject with the Embassy. End Comment.

Pierce